

# the condition of education 2007



## INDICATOR 42

### Fields of Study

The indicator and corresponding tables are taken directly from *The Condition of Education 2007*. Therefore, the page numbers may not be sequential.

Additional information about the survey data and supplementary notes can be found in the full report. For a copy of *The Condition of Education 2007*, visit the NCES website (<http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2007064>) or contact ED PUBs at 1-877-4ED-PUBS.

**Suggested Citation:**

U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2007). *The Condition of Education 2007* (NCES 2007-064). Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.



# Programs and Courses

## Fields of Study

*In 2004–05, business degrees made up 16 percent of all degrees awarded at the associate's degree level, 22 percent of degrees awarded at the bachelor's degree level, and 25 percent of degrees awarded at the master's degree level.*

Although there are over 20 major fields of study at each of the associate's, bachelor's, master's, and doctoral levels, more than half of the postsecondary degrees awarded are concentrated in a relatively small number of fields. This indicator examines the most common fields at each postsecondary degree level in academic years 1990–91, 1997–98, and 2004–05 as well as changes over time.

In each of these years, between 63 and 68 percent of associate's degrees were awarded in liberal arts and sciences, general studies, and humanities; health professions and related clinical sciences; and business (see supplemental table 42-1). In 2004–05, these three fields, along with engineering and engineering technologies (8 percent) and computer and information sciences (5 percent), made up 81 percent of the associate's degrees awarded.

In each of these years, between 50 and 54 percent of bachelor's degrees were awarded in business, social sciences and history, education, psychology, and visual and performing arts (see supplemental table 42-2). In 2004–05, these five fields, along with health professions and related clinical sciences; engineering and engineering technologies; communications, journalism and related programs; and biological and biomedical sciences (each between 5 and 6 percent of all bachelor's degrees awarded), made up 72 percent of the bachelor's degrees awarded.

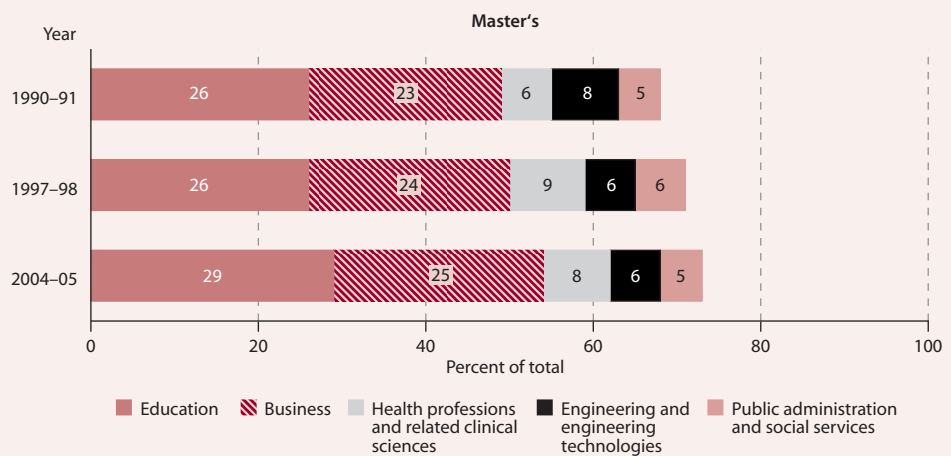
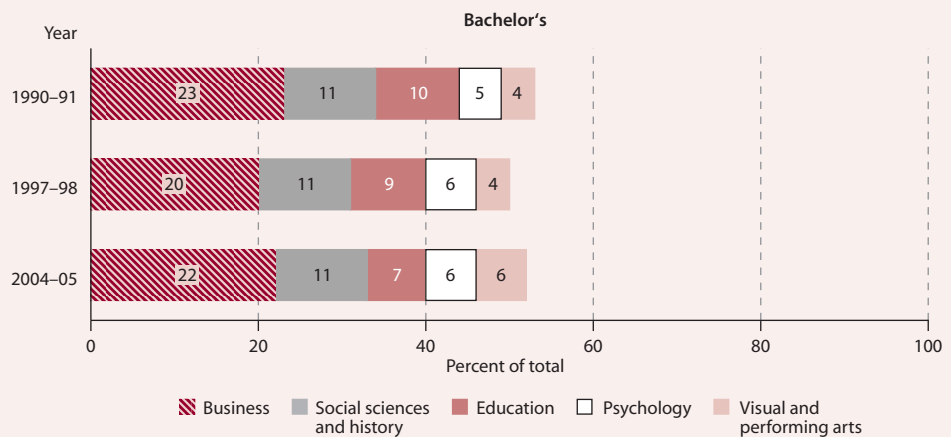
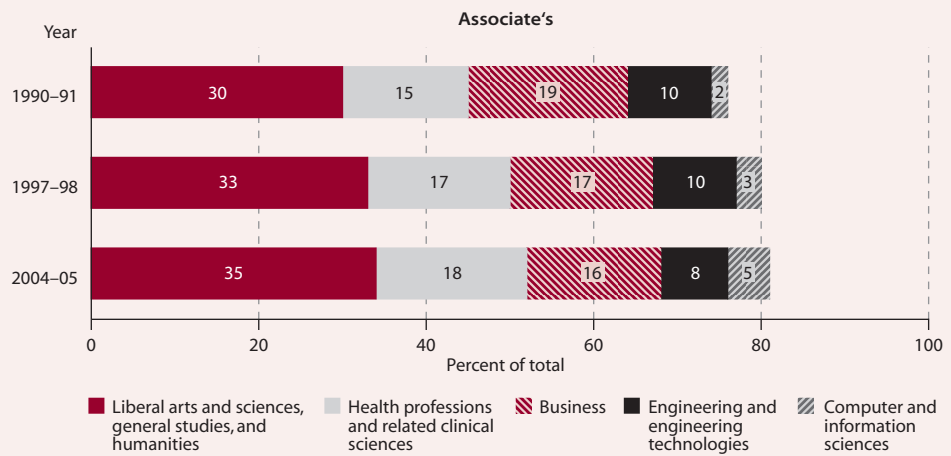
Between 49 and 54 percent of all master's degrees were awarded in education and business in each of these years (see supplemental table 42-3). In 2004–05, these two fields, along with health professions and related clinical sciences (8 percent), engineering and engineering technologies (6 percent), and public administration and social services (5 percent), made up 73 percent of the master's degrees awarded.

In each of these years, between 31 and 38 percent of all doctoral degrees were awarded in education, engineering and engineering technologies, and health professions and related clinical sciences. In 2004–05, these three fields, along with biological and biomedical sciences (11 percent), psychology (10 percent), physical sciences and science technologies (8 percent), and social sciences and history (7 percent), made up 74 percent of the doctoral degrees awarded.

Between 50 and 53 percent of first-professional degrees were awarded in law in each of these years. In 2004–05, medicine made up an additional 18 percent and dentistry an additional 5 percent of all first-professional degrees awarded.

At most degree levels, notable changes occurred in certain fields in recent years (see supplemental tables 42-1, 42-2, and 42-3). Between 1997–98 and 2004–05, the field of computer and information sciences grew by nearly 100 percent at the associate's level (compared with a 25 percent overall growth in associate's degrees), and by 57 percent at the master's level (compared with a 34 percent overall growth in master's degrees). At the doctoral level, the field of health professions and related clinical sciences grew by nearly 200 percent between 1997–98 and 2004–05, compared with a 14 percent overall growth in doctoral degrees.

Other common fields experienced little or no growth between 1997–98 and 2004–05. The field of engineering and engineering technologies, for example, saw a slight decrease in the number of degrees granted at the associate's level and experienced no change at the bachelor's level in recent years. While the field of education has also been predominant at the bachelor's level, there was no increase in the number of degrees awarded in this field during this period. At the first-professional degree level, the field of medicine experienced virtually no growth between 1997–98 and 2004–05.


**FIELDS OF STUDY: Percentage of associate's, bachelor's, and master's degrees awarded by degree-granting institutions, by selected fields of study: 1990–91, 1997–98, and 2004–05**


NOTE: The five most common fields of study at each degree level in academic year 2004–05 are highlighted for academic years 1990–91, 1997–98, and 2004–05; the remaining fields of study at each level are not shown. See *supplemental note 10* for more information on fields of study. See *supplemental note 3* for more information on the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS).

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (NCES). *Digest of Education Statistics, 2006* (NCES 2007–017), tables 252, 254, and 255, and NCES. (2004). *Digest of Education Statistics, 2003* (NCES 2005–025), table 250; data from U.S. Department of Education, NCES, 1990–91, 1997–98, and 2004–05 Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, “Completions Survey” (IPEDS–C:90 and 97), and Fall 2005.


**FOR MORE INFORMATION:**

Supplemental Notes 3, 10  
Supplemental Tables 42–1,  
42–2, 42–3

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## Fields of Study

**Table 42-1. Number of associate's degrees awarded by degree-granting institutions, percentage of total, and percent change, by selected fields of study: 1990–91, 1997–98, and 2004–05**

Field of study	1990–91		1997–98		2004–05		Percent change		
	Number	Percent of total	Number	Percent of total	Number	Percent of total	1990–91 to 1997–98	1997–98 to 2004–05	1990–91 to 2004–05
<b>Total<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>481,700</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>558,600</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>696,700</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>16.0</b>	<b>24.7</b>	<b>44.6</b>
Liberal arts and sciences, general studies, and humanities	142,700	29.6	186,200	33.3	240,100	34.5	30.5	28.9	68.3
Health professions and related clinical sciences	70,800	14.7	94,900	17.0	122,500	17.6	34.0	29.0	73.0
Business	89,500	18.6	95,300	17.1	112,400	16.1	6.5	17.9	25.5
Engineering and engineering technologies	49,800	10.3	55,700	10.0	53,100	7.6	11.8	-4.5	6.7
Computer and information sciences	7,700	1.6	18,200	3.3	36,200	5.2	136.9	98.9	371.2
Security and protective services	13,600	2.8	19,000	3.4	23,700	3.4	40.1	25.0	75.1
Visual and performing arts	9,100	1.9	15,000	2.7	22,700	3.3	64.1	51.2	148.2
Multi/interdisciplinary studies	7,500	1.5	9,400	1.7	13,900	2.0	26.1	47.7	86.3
Education	7,800	1.6	9,500	1.7	13,300	1.9	20.6	40.9	70.0
Family and consumer sciences/human sciences	8,100	1.7	7,800	1.4	9,700	1.4	-3.2	24.3	20.3
Legal professions and studies	5,500	1.1	9,900	1.8	9,900	1.4	80.3	-0.1	80.3
Agriculture and natural resources	4,900	1.0	6,700	1.2	6,400	0.9	35.9	-4.0	30.4
Social sciences and history	2,500	0.5	4,200	0.8	6,500	0.9	67.5	55.7	160.8
Communications, journalism, and related programs	3,900	0.8	5,000	0.9	6,100	0.9	29.2	21.0	56.3
Public administration and social services	2,800	0.6	4,200	0.7	4,000	0.6	49.6	-3.1	44.9
Physical sciences and science technologies	2,100	0.4	2,300	0.4	2,800	0.4	9.3	23.1	34.6
Precision production trades	9,100	1.9	1,900	0.3	2,000	0.3	-78.8	5.7	-77.6
Psychology	1,000	0.2	1,800	0.3	1,900	0.3	77.0	10.0	94.8
Biological and biomedical sciences	1,100	0.2	2,100	0.4	1,700	0.2	88.8	-19.1	52.7
Transportation and material moving workers	2,600	0.5	1,000	0.2	1,400	0.2	-62.6	46.9	-45.0
Foreign languages and literatures and linguistics	300	0.1	1,700	0.3	1,200	0.2	411.9	-26.3	277.4

<sup>1</sup> Includes other fields not shown separately.

NOTE: The new Classification of Instructional Programs was initiated in 2002–03. The figures for earlier years have been reclassified when necessary to conform to the new taxonomy. See *supplemental note 10* for more information on fields of study. See *supplemental note 3* for more information about the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (NCES). *Digest of Education Statistics, 2006* (NCES 2007-017), table 252, and NCES. (2004). *Digest of Education Statistics, 2003* (NCES 2005-025), table 250; data from U.S. Department of Education, NCES, 1990–91, 1997–98, and 2004–05 Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, "Completions Survey" (IPEDS-C:90 and 97), and Fall 2005.

## Fields of Study

**Table 42-2. Number of bachelor's degrees awarded by degree-granting institutions, percentage of total, and percent change, by selected fields of study: 1990–91, 1997–98, and 2004–05**

Field of study	1990–91		1997–98		2004–05		Percent change		
	Number	Percent of total	Number	Percent of total	Number	Percent of total	1990–91 to 1997–98	1997–98 to 2004–05	1990–91 to 2004–05
<b>Total<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>1,094,500</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,184,400</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,439,300</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>8.2</b>	<b>21.5</b>	<b>31.5</b>
Business	249,200	22.8	232,100	19.6	311,600	21.6	-6.9	34.3	25.0
Social sciences and history	125,100	11.4	125,000	10.6	156,900	10.9	-0.1	25.5	25.4
Education	110,800	10.1	105,800	8.9	105,500	7.3	-4.5	-0.4	-4.8
Psychology	58,700	5.4	74,100	6.3	85,600	5.9	26.3	15.5	46.0
Visual and performing arts	42,200	3.9	52,100	4.4	81,000	5.6	23.4	55.5	91.9
Health professions and related clinical sciences	59,900	5.5	86,800	7.3	80,700	5.6	45.0	-7.1	34.8
Engineering and engineering technologies	79,800	7.3	78,700	6.6	78,600	5.5	-1.4	-0.1	-1.5
Communications, journalism, and related programs	51,700	4.7	49,400	4.2	72,700	5.1	-4.4	47.2	40.8
Biological and biomedical sciences	39,400	3.6	65,600	5.5	64,600	4.5	66.6	-1.5	64.1
Computer and information sciences	25,200	2.3	27,800	2.3	54,100	3.8	10.6	94.4	115.1
English language and literature/letters	51,100	4.7	49,000	4.1	54,400	3.8	-4.0	10.9	6.5
Liberal arts, sciences, general studies, and humanities	30,500	2.8	33,200	2.8	43,800	3.0	8.8	31.8	43.3
Multi/interdisciplinary studies	17,900	1.6	27,000	2.3	30,200	2.1	50.8	12.2	69.2
Security and protective services	16,800	1.5	25,100	2.1	30,700	2.1	49.2	22.5	82.8
Agriculture and natural resources	13,100	1.2	23,300	2.0	23,000	1.6	77.4	-1.2	75.3
Parks, recreation, leisure and fitness studies	4,300	0.4	15,400	1.3	22,900	1.6	257.4	48.4	430.4
Public administration and social services	14,400	1.3	20,400	1.7	21,800	1.5	42.2	6.7	51.7
Family and consumer sciences/human sciences	13,900	1.3	15,700	1.3	20,100	1.4	12.5	28.2	44.2
Physical sciences and science technologies	16,300	1.5	19,400	1.6	18,900	1.3	18.5	-2.4	15.7
Foreign languages and literature and linguistics	13,900	1.3	15,300	1.3	18,400	1.3	9.6	20.3	31.9
Mathematics and statistics	14,400	1.3	11,800	1.0	14,400	1.0	-18.1	21.7	-0.3
Philosophy and religious studies	7,400	0.7	8,400	0.7	11,600	0.8	12.9	38.2	56.1

<sup>1</sup> Includes other fields not shown separately.

NOTE: The new Classification of Instructional Programs was initiated in 2002–03. The figures for earlier years have been reclassified when necessary to conform to the new taxonomy. See *supplemental note 10* for more information on fields of study. See *supplemental note 3* for more information about the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *Digest of Education Statistics, 2006* (NCES 2007–017), table 254; data from U.S. Department of Education, NCES, 1990–91, 1997–98, and 2004–05 Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, “Completions Survey” (IPEDS–C:90 and 97), and Fall 2005.

## Fields of Study

**Table 42-3. Number of master's, doctoral, and first-professional degrees awarded by degree-granting institutions, percentage of total, and percent change, by selected fields of study: 1990–91, 1997–98, and 2004–05**

Field of study	1990–91		1997–98		2004–05		Percent change		
	Number	Percent of total	Number	Percent of total	Number	Percent of total	1990–91 to 1997–98	1997–98 to 2004–05	1990–91 to 2004–05
<b>Master's degrees</b>									
<b>Total<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>337,200</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>430,200</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>574,600</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>27.6</b>	<b>33.6</b>	<b>70.4</b>
Education	87,400	25.9	113,400	26.4	167,500	29.1	29.8	47.7	91.7
Business	78,300	23.2	101,700	23.6	142,600	24.8	29.9	40.3	82.2
Health professions and related clinical sciences	21,400	6.3	39,600	9.2	46,700	8.1	85.3	18.0	118.7
Engineering and engineering technologies	25,500	7.5	27,300	6.4	35,100	6.1	7.4	28.6	38.0
Public administration and social services	17,900	5.3	25,100	5.8	29,600	5.1	40.4	17.5	65.0
Psychology	11,300	3.4	15,100	3.5	18,800	3.3	33.4	24.4	65.9
Computer and information sciences	9,300	2.8	11,800	2.7	18,400	3.2	26.2	56.5	97.5
Social sciences and history	12,200	3.6	14,900	3.5	17,000	3.0	22.1	13.5	38.6
Visual and performing arts	8,700	2.6	11,100	2.6	13,200	2.3	28.7	18.3	52.3
English language/literature/letters	6,800	2.0	7,600	1.8	8,500	1.5	11.8	11.6	24.8
Biological and biomedical sciences	4,800	1.4	6,800	1.6	8,200	1.4	41.5	20.8	71.0
Communication, journalism, and related programs	4,300	1.3	6,100	1.4	7,200	1.3	40.9	18.0	66.3
Physical sciences and science technologies	5,300	1.6	5,300	1.2	5,700	1.0	0.9	6.6	7.5
Agriculture/natural resources	3,300	1.0	4,500	1.0	4,700	0.8	35.5	5.3	42.6
Mathematics and statistics	3,500	1.1	3,400	0.8	4,500	0.8	-3.9	32.0	26.8
<b>Doctoral degrees<sup>2</sup></b>									
<b>Total<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>39,300</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>46,000</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>52,600</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>17.1</b>	<b>14.4</b>	<b>33.9</b>
Education	6,200	15.8	6,300	13.6	7,700	14.6	1.2	22.7	24.1
Engineering and engineering technologies	5,300	13.6	6,000	13.1	6,600	12.5	13.3	9.3	23.8
Health professions and related clinical sciences	1,500	3.9	2,000	4.3	5,900	11.1	28.7	197.1	282.5
Biological and biomedical sciences	4,000	10.3	5,200	11.4	5,600	10.6	29.8	6.5	38.3
Psychology	3,900	10.0	4,500	9.9	5,100	9.7	15.5	12.4	29.9
Physical sciences and science technologies	4,200	10.8	4,500	9.8	4,100	7.8	6.4	-9.0	-3.2
Social sciences and history	3,000	7.7	4,100	9.0	3,800	7.3	37.0	-7.5	26.8
Business	1,200	3.0	1,300	2.8	1,500	2.8	8.9	16.1	26.4
Visual and performing arts	800	2.1	1,200	2.5	1,300	2.4	38.8	9.9	52.5
English language/literature/letters	1,100	2.7	1,500	3.2	1,200	2.3	41.0	-18.6	14.8
Mathematics and statistics	1,000	2.5	1,200	2.6	1,200	2.2	24.2	-3.2	20.2
Agriculture/natural resources	1,200	3.0	1,300	2.8	1,200	2.2	8.9	-9.1	-1.0
Computer/information sciences	700	1.7	900	1.9	1,100	2.1	26.9	30.4	65.5
Foreign languages, literatures, and linguistics	900	2.3	1,100	2.4	1,000	2.0	25.8	-8.1	15.5
Multi/interdisciplinary studies	400	1.1	800	1.8	1,000	1.9	98.8	16.6	131.8

See notes at end of table.

## Fields of Study

**Table 42-3. Number of master's, doctoral, and first-professional degrees awarded by degree-granting institutions, percentage of total, and percent change, by selected fields of study: 1990–91, 1997–98, and 2004–05—Continued**

Field of study	1990–91		1997–98		2004–05		Percent change		
	Number	Percent of total	Number	Percent of total	Number	Percent of total	1990–91 to 1997–98	1997–98 to 2004–05	1990–91 to 2004–05
<b>First-professional degrees<sup>3</sup></b>									
<b>Total<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>71,900</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>78,600</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>87,300</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>9.2</b>	<b>11.1</b>	<b>21.3</b>
Law	37,900	52.7	39,300	50.0	43,400	49.7	3.7	10.4	14.4
Medicine	15,000	20.9	15,400	19.6	15,500	17.7	2.5	0.2	2.8
Dentistry	3,700	5.1	4,000	5.1	4,500	5.1	9.0	10.5	20.4

<sup>1</sup> Includes other fields not shown separately.<sup>2</sup> Includes Ph.D., Ed.D., and comparable degrees at the doctoral level.<sup>3</sup> An award that requires completion of a degree program that meets all of the following criteria: (1) completion of the academic requirements to begin practice in the profession; (2) at least 2 years of college work before entering the degree program; and (3) a total of at least 6 academic years of college work to complete the degree program, including previously required college work plus the work required in the professional program itself. See glossary for a complete list of first-professional degrees.NOTE: The new Classification of Instructional Programs was initiated in 2002–03. The figures for earlier years have been reclassified when necessary to conform to the new taxonomy. See *supplemental note 10* for more information on fields of study. Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding. See *supplemental note 3* for more information about the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS).SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *Digest of Education Statistics, 2006* (NCES 2007–017), tables 254, 256, and 262; data from U.S. Department of Education, NCES, 1990–91, 1997–98, and 2004–05 Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, "Completions Survey" (IPEDS–C:90 and 97), and Fall 2005.